

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS**

AUSTIN DIVISION

ALFORD BRADFORD,
Petitioner,

V.

NATHANIEL QUARTERMAN,
Director, Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice-
Correctional Institutions
Division,
Respondent.

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A-05-CA-276-SS

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION OF UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

To: The Honorable Sam Sparks, United States District Judge

The Magistrate Judge submits this Report and Recommendation to the District Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §636(b) and Rule 1(e) of Appendix C of the Local Court Rules of the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas, Local Rules for the Assignment of Duties to United States Magistrates, as amended, effective December 1, 2002.

Before the Court are Petitioner's Application for Habeas Corpus Relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 (Document 1) and Respondent's Motion to Dismiss (Document 29). Petitioner did not file a response thereto. Petitioner, proceeding pro se, has been granted leave to proceed in forma pauperis. For the reasons set forth below, the undersigned finds that Petitioner's application for writ of habeas corpus should be dismissed.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

A. Petitioner's Criminal History

According to Respondent, the Director has lawful and valid custody of Petitioner pursuant to a judgment and sentence of the 299th Judicial District Court of Travis County, Texas in cause numbers 0923194 and 0923195. Petitioner pleaded guilty to aggravated robbery with a deadly weapon and aggravated sexual assault with a deadly weapon, and was sentenced to 60 years in prison on September 28, 1992. Petitioner did not appeal his convictions. He also has not filed a state application for habeas corpus relief.

On April 20, 2005, the Court received Petitioner's federal application for habeas corpus relief. Petitioner indicated he received a 60-year sentence for his crimes. However, he failed to indicate the county of the convictions. Therefore, Court personnel contacted the records department of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice - Correctional Institutions Division and was informed Petitioner's convictions were out of Calhoun County. Because Calhoun County is within the geographical boundaries of the Victoria Division of the Eastern District of Texas, the Court transferred Petitioner's application to that court.

More than a year passed before the Victoria court ordered Respondent to answer. On July 19, 2006, Respondent filed a motion requesting that the case be dismissed for lack of jurisdiction. At that time, Respondent notified the Court that Petitioner's convictions were actually out of Travis County. On January 31, 2007, the Victoria court denied the motion to dismiss and transferred the case to this Court.

B. Petitioner's Grounds for Relief

Petitioner raises the following grounds for relief:

1. He was denied effective assistance of counsel because counsel did not request a complete hearing and did not explain the consequences of pleading guilty;
2. His due process and equal protection rights were violated because the trial judge did not explain the rights Petitioner was waiving by pleading guilty;
3. His schizophrenia prevented an understanding between Petitioner and the court; and
4. His guilty plea was not made knowingly.

C. Motion to Dismiss

Respondent moves to dismiss Petitioner's application, because he did not appeal his conviction and he has not filed a state application for habeas corpus relief. Respondent also moves to dismiss Petitioner's application as time-barred.

II. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

A. Statute of Limitations

On April 24, 1996, the President signed into law the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 ["AEDPA"]. The AEDPA amended 28 U.S.C. § 2244 to provide a statute of limitations for applications for habeas corpus relief filed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254. That section provides, in relevant part:

(d)(1) A 1-year period of limitation shall apply to an application for a writ of habeas corpus by a person in custody pursuant to the judgment of a State court. The limitation period shall run from the latest of—

(A) the date on which the judgment became final by the conclusion of direct review or the expiration of the time for seeking such review;

(B) the date on which the impediment to filing an application created by State action in violation of the Constitution or laws of the United States is removed, if the applicant was prevented from filing by such State action;

(C) the date on which the constitutional right asserted was initially recognized by the Supreme Court, if the right has been newly recognized by the Supreme Court and made retroactively applicable to cases on collateral review; or

(D) the date on which the factual predicate of the claim or claims presented could have been discovered through the exercise of due diligence.

(2) The time during which a properly filed application for State post-conviction or other collateral review with respect to the pertinent judgment or claim is pending shall not be counted toward any period of limitation under this subsection.

Petitioner's conviction became final prior to the enactment of the AEDPA. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals has addressed the applicability of the limitations provision to habeas applications filed after the enactment of the AEDPA attacking convictions which became final prior thereto in United States v. Flores, 135 F.3d 1000 (5th Cir. 1998). The Flores court determined that prisoners must be accorded a reasonable time after the AEDPA's effective date within which to file petitions for collateral relief. Id. at 1005. The Court concluded that petitioners attacking convictions or sentences which became final prior to the AEDPA's effective date will be accorded the one-year post-AEDPA period, commencing on the Act's effective date, to file for relief. Id. at 1006. The Fifth Circuit joined the Seventh, Ninth, and Tenth Circuits in holding that one year, commencing on April 24, 1996, presumptively constitutes a reasonable time for those prisoners whose convictions had become final prior to the enactment of the AEDPA to file for relief. Id. While the Flores opinion concerned the limitations provision for filing motions pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2255, the reasonable time for filing applications for habeas corpus relief pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254 should be the same. Therefore, Petitioner's application, to be timely, would have had to have been filed on or before

April 24, 1997. Petitioner did not execute his application until April 14, 2005, almost eight years after the expiration of the limitations period.

The record does not reflect that any unconstitutional state action impeded Petitioner from filing for federal habeas corpus relief prior to the end of the one-year grace period. Furthermore, Petitioner has not shown that he did not know the factual predicate of his claims earlier. Finally, the claims do not concern a constitutional right recognized by the Supreme Court within the last year and made retroactive to cases on collateral review.

B. Exhaustion

Petitioner's application should also be dismissed because he failed to exhaust his state court remedies prior to filing his federal application for habeas corpus relief. A fundamental prerequisite to federal habeas corpus relief under Title 28 U.S.C. § 2254 is the exhaustion of all claims in state court prior to requesting federal collateral relief. Sterling v. Scott, 57 F.3d 451, 453 (5th Cir. 1995), cert. denied, 116 S. Ct. 715 (1996). Section 2254(b) provides that:

- (1) An application for a writ of habeas corpus on behalf of a person in custody pursuant to the judgment of a State court shall not be granted unless it appears that:
 - (A) the applicant has exhausted the remedies available in the courts of the State; or
 - (B) (i) there is an absence of available State corrective process; or
(ii) circumstances exist that render such process ineffective to protect the rights of the applicant.

28 U.S.C. § 2254. This requirement is designed in the interests of comity and federalism to give state courts the initial opportunity to pass upon and correct errors of federal law in a state prisoner's conviction. Picard v. Connor, 404 U.S. 270, 275-76, 92 S. Ct. 509, 512 (1971). The purpose and

policy underlying the exhaustion doctrine is to preserve the role of the state courts in the application and enforcement of federal law and prevent disruption of state criminal proceedings. Rose v. Lundy, 455 U.S. 509, 518, 102 S. Ct. 1198, 1203 (1982)(citing, Braden v. 30th Judicial Circuit Court of Kentucky, 410 U.S. 484, 490-91, 93 S. Ct. 1123, 1127 (1973)).

A petition under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 "must be dismissed if state remedies have not been exhausted as to any of the federal claims." Castille v. Peoples, 489 U.S. 346, 349, 109 S. Ct. 1056, 1059 (1989). The exhaustion doctrine "requires that the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals be given an opportunity to review and rule upon the petitioner's claim before he resorts to the federal courts." Richardson v. Procnier, 762 F.2d 429, 431 (5th Cir. 1985). Once a federal claim has been fairly presented to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, either through direct appeal or collateral attack, the exhaustion requirement is satisfied. See generally, Castille, 489 U.S. at 351, 109 S. Ct. at 1060. In order to avoid piecemeal litigation, all grounds raised in a federal application for writ of habeas corpus must first be presented to the state's highest criminal court prior to being presented in federal court. Rose, 455 U.S. at 522, 102 S. Ct. at 1205. If even one claim is unexhausted, the entire petition must be dismissed for failure to exhaust state remedies. Id.

In the present case, Petitioner has not presented his claims to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. Accordingly, there has been no fair presentation of his claims to the state court, and thus, the state court has not had the initial opportunity to pass upon and correct any alleged errors of federal law. Nevertheless, the exhaustion requirement can be excused when exceptional circumstances exist. See, Deters v. Collins, 985 F.2d 789 (5th Cir. 1993). However, Petitioner makes no allegations that any exceptional circumstances are present in this case. Therefore, the

Court finds that Petitioner has failed to exhaust his state court remedies and has failed to allege any circumstances which would allow the Court to excuse the exhaustion requirement.

III. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Respondent's Motion to Dismiss be granted and Petitioner's application for writ of habeas corpus be dismissed with prejudice as time-barred. Alternatively, it is recommended that Petitioner's application for writ of habeas corpus be dismissed without prejudice for failure to exhaust his state court remedies.

IV. OBJECTIONS

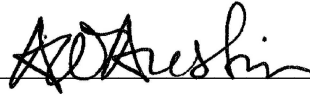
The parties may file objections to this Report and Recommendation. A party filing objections must specifically identify those findings or recommendations to which objections are being made. The District Court need not consider frivolous, conclusive, or general objections. Battles v. United States Parole Comm'n, 834 F.2d 419, 421 (5th Cir. 1987).

A party's failure to file written objections to the proposed findings and recommendations contained in this Report within ten (10) days after the party is served with a copy of the Report shall bar that party from de novo review by the district court of the proposed findings and recommendations in the Report and, except upon grounds of plain error, shall bar the party from appellate review of unobjected-to proposed factual findings and legal conclusions accepted by the district court. See 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C); Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140, 150-153, 106 S. Ct. 466, 472-74 (1985); Douglass v. United Servs. Auto. Assoc., 79 F.3d 1415 (5th Cir. 1996)(en banc).

To the extent that a party has not been served by the Clerk with this Report and Recommendation electronically, pursuant to the CM/ECF procedures of this District, the Clerk is

ORDERED to mail such party a copy of this Report and Recommendation by certified mail, return receipt requested.

SIGNED this 29th day of October, 2007.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Austin", written over a horizontal line.

ANDREW W. AUSTIN
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE